

Washington - In testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law (CAL), six former United States Attorneys contradicted Bush Administration explanations for their terminations. Several testified about the partisan political pressures placed on them before their firings and stated that they were terminated to make way for Bush political loyalists.

CAL Chairwoman Linda Sánchez subpoenaed the former federal prosecutors, most of whom had led investigations into cases of political corruption. The prosecutors cited positive job reviews and internal communications to dispel the Bush Administration's stated reasons for the terminations, and testified about an attempt by the Department of Justice to prevent them from publicly discussing their cases.

"Our country decided after the Watergate scandal that ideological partisanship has no place in our system of justice," said Chairwoman Sánchez. "Unfortunately, the firings of these attorneys indicate that the Bush Administration has once again acted in the interest of its political party instead of the good of the nation."

Former U.S. Attorneys David Bogden from Nevada and Paul Charlton from Arizona testified that Acting Associate Attorney General William Mercer told them that the prosecutors were not fired for job performance issues, as Deputy Attorney General Paul McNulty had told the U.S. Senate in an earlier hearing.

"Today's testimony signals that it is time to rein in this President and his Administration before they do any further damage to our democracy," said Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers. "Today, we received strong evidence that the firing of these U.S. Attorneys was politically motivated, and we clearly need to follow up on these developments with further investigations."

David Iglesias, former U.S. Attorney from New Mexico, testified that U.S. Senator Pete Domenici and U.S. Representative Heather Wilson called him in the days before the close 2006 elections to discuss issuing an indictment against a local Democratic official. Mr. Iglesias said that after Senator Domenici abruptly hung up the phone, "I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. Six weeks later I got the call that I had to move on."

H.E. "Bud" Cummins III, a former U.S. Attorney from Arkansas, testified that Michael Elston, Chief of Staff to Deputy U.S. Attorney General Paul McNulty, called him with a warning that any of the fired prosecutors who publicly discussed their cases would be targeted by negative information campaigns. Mr. Cummins warned his colleagues that the Department of Justice would view their testimony as a "major escalation of the controversy," and that the fired prosecutors "might suffer some embarrassment from the disclosure of additional information" by the administration.

"The Department of Justice, which had no effective oversight during the previous majority, has been acting behind closed doors to empower political cronies and intimidate its own appointees," said Chairwoman Sánchez. "This thuggish behavior is beneath our democracy and underscores the importance of Congressional oversight, a function that Chairman Conyers

and I are committed to continue."

"The testimony we heard today made a convincing case for passage of H.R. 580 to restore checks and balances in the appointment of U.S. attorneys," said Chairwoman Sánchez.